

Nd Talking with Teens (Ages 15–17) About Suicide Loss

A Guide for Parents & Caregivers

Teens may want more honesty, more privacy, and more control of the story. Suicide loss can raise deep questions about meaning, mental health, and their own future. They need respect, clear facts without graphic detail, and a safety net that includes professional help when needed.

Key Truths to Hold

Suicide is preventable for many people. Help, treatment, and connection save lives. This is not “inevitable destiny.”

Survivors often feel guilt. Teens may wonder what they “should have” done. Gently challenge false blame.

Peer contagion is real. Watch how the story spreads among friends; encourage safe talk and real support.

How to Talk (Ages 15–17)

Be direct and respectful. Use accurate language. Invite their view without dumping adult graphic details.

Do not romanticize the death. Honor the person; do not glorify how they died.

Talk about mental health as real. Depression and despair deserve care, not shame.

Share crisis tools. Make sure they know 988, trusted adults, and that asking for help is strength.

Support counseling. Offer to help them find a therapist or school counselor — and go with them if they want.

Stay connected. Meals, rides, texts, and presence matter even when they pull away.

Warning Signs in Teens

Talk of wanting to die, feeling like a burden, giving away possessions, isolation, substance use, rage or despair, or researching ways to die. If you see these, get help immediately — 988 or 911.

What to Avoid

Minimizing (“they’re in a better place” too fast), blaming the teen, forcing a public performance of grief, or leaving them alone with only the internet for answers.

If You Are in Crisis

Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). Veterans and service members: call 988, then press 1, or text 838255. Text HOME to 741741. In an emergency, call 911. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Teens need adults who tell the truth and still show up. Your steady faith, clear safety plan, and willingness to get help can save a life — including theirs.